

VZCZCXRO5452
RR RUEHGI RUEHRN RUEHROV
DE RUEHKM #0312/01 0540310
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 230310Z FEB 07
FM AMEMBASSY KAMPALA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8291
INFO RUEHKKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 0538
RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE
RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE
RHMFIUU/CJTF HOA

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 KAMPALA 000312

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [EAID](#) [UG](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: UGANDA: SCENESETTER FOR GENERAL WARD (FEB 27-28)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Uganda is a productive player for U.S. policy interests in Africa with Ugandan troops deploying to Somalia assisted by U.S. money, and logistics. Uganda cooperates fully in the War on Terror, and is highly receptive to U.S. training and presence. On the humanitarian and development side, Uganda vigorously supports a number of US initiatives including Presidential initiatives on Aids (PEPFAR) and Malaria (PMI) and U.S. free trade and free market Objectives.

¶2. (SBU) Uganda also has a number of challenges. Uganda's search for a peaceful resolution to the 21-year long conflict with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) continues, but is stalled because the LRA delegates refuse to return to the negotiating table in Juba, southern Sudan. The Ugandan military is facing serious challenges as it carries out a forcible disarmament program in Karamoja, which has resulted in numerous deaths. The United States is the largest bilateral donor for humanitarian efforts to assist the 1.5 million displaced persons in northern Uganda. Museveni is facing significant internal pressure from within the ruling party on issues of succession, accountability, and human rights and media freedoms. Museveni supports liberal market principles and foreign investment, although corruption remains a problem. Uganda recently was approved for the Millenium Challenge Corporation and will receive \$10 million for anti-corruption measures. Uganda reduced its HIV/AIDS rate from 18 percent in 1992 to 6.4 percent in 2006 and received \$170 million in 2006 as a focus country for the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). End Summary.

- - - - -
PEACE AND SECURITY
- - - - -

¶3. (SBU) The security situation in northern Uganda improved dramatically over the past year. The insurgent Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) which was pushed into Congo in December 2005 agreed to negotiate with the Government of Uganda. Talks began in July 2006 and yielded a Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CHA) which allowed combatants safe passage out of Northern Uganda to assemble in designated areas in Southern Sudan. The LRA failed to assemble, claiming the UPDF had surrounded the areas. There have been LRA attacks along key roads between Uganda and Juba, but since August 2006, there have been none in northern Uganda. Recent press reports say that the LRA's top leadership may have moved out of Garamba National Park to Central African Republic (CAR).

¶4. (SBU) Currently, the peace talks remain stalled because the LRA refuses to return to Juba. The LRA delegates--primarily members of the anti-Museveni diaspora--are lobbying to change the venue of talks to Kenya or South Africa and to replace the Government of Southern Sudan's Mediator, Riek Machar. Meanwhile, the GOU's direct discussions between LRA leaders Joseph Kony and Vincent Otti have broken down. The latest extension of the CHA expires on February 28. The leader of the Government's negotiating team, Minister of Internal Affairs Ruhukana Rugunda, stated on February 18, that the

GOU will not resume hostilities. Nonetheless, the Ugandan military continues to lay the groundwork for its "Plan B", a military strike against the LRA leadership. However, the Government does not yet have permission from Congo to carry out operations there. The GOU has been in contact with the government of CAR.

15. (SBU) In northeastern Uganda, the Government's forcible disarmament program has led to increasing insecurity and violence in Karamoja. Humanitarian agencies report that the security situation in Kotido, Kaabong, and Abim districts continues to deteriorate as the result of armed confrontations between the UPDF and Karamojong warriors. On February 13, clashes between the UPDF and Karamojong killed at least 52 warriors and 4 soldiers in two days of running battles after a series of ambushes against military convoys.

16. (SBU) Ugandan troops are set to deploy to Somalia as part of an African Union Peacekeeping Mission (AMISOM). President Museveni during his tenure as head of IGAD oversaw the establishment of the Transitional Federal Government and Institutions, and committed to send Ugandan troops. The Ugandans believe that a stable Somalia is necessary for peace and stability throughout East Africa especially for ending the flow of small arms into Karamoja. Ugandan's 1500 troops will be deployed beginning March 5 and Uganda's MG Levi Karahunga, a veteran of the Liberia peacekeeping mission, will be AMISOM's force commander.

17. (SBU) Uganda is proud to have been part of the "coalition of the willing" in the fight against global terror. Government officials are preoccupied with the spread of Arab fundamentalism. They frequently and publicly make the distinction between Arab states, such as Sudan and Eritrea and black African neighbors. Uganda is a predominately Christian country and promotes good relations with its Muslim community.

KAMPALA 00000312 002 OF 004

- - - - -
HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE
- - - - -

18. (SBU) The 21-year old LRA conflict displaced over 1.5 million people. Hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) have returned near or to their lands as the result of improved security. Residents of Lango and Teso district have left IDP camps and those in Gulu are beginning to do so in higher numbers. The Government lacks a clear, consistent message on returns, which has been a particular problem in Kitgum, the district closest to the border with Sudan.

19. (SBU) The improved security situation has led to a decline in the numbers of night commuters--children who seek sleep in shelters to avoid abduction from the LRA--to 2,700, according to UNICEF. These numbers are down from 23,885 in December 2005. Surveys indicate the number of children that continue to commute do so for reasons other than fear of abduction, such as domestic abuse and availability of services.

- - - - -
USG ACTIVITIES
- - - - -

110. (SBU) Various Mission agencies are working together to enhance peace and security in northern Uganda through a three-pronged strategy of humanitarian, political, and military assistance. Our overall assistance in FY06 exceeded \$88 million. The U.S. is the largest bilateral donor of food assistance for the 1.5 million displaced persons and refugees. We provide a variety of other water, health, and sanitation assistance. We support UNHCR and others in programs to ensure the safe and voluntary return of displaced persons to their homes or intermediate locations.

111. (SBU) We have promoted reconciliation, dialogue, and reintegration of former combatants through USAID programs aimed at mitigating conflict. Embassy officers engage with key players in the negotiations. Modest amounts of Defense Department funds are being used to provide non-lethal assistance to help the UPDF protect

civilians and relief supplies in northern Uganda. CJTF-HOA is working on humanitarian projects with the UPDF in northern Uganda to improve civilian-military relations. Post is using IMET, ACOTA, and ACSS programs as well as participation in regional exercises to enhance the professionalism of the Ugandan military. On Somalia, the State Department funded the logistics of the UPDF's deployment while CJTF-HOA provided logisticians and members of the DAO's office coordinated the operation with the UPDF.

- - - - -
DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE
- - - - -

¶12. (SBU) One year after returning to multi-party rule, Uganda is experiencing growing pains. The ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party is grappling with internal dissent among younger parliamentarians who resent the monopolistic behavior of the Movement's "historicals". Recent internal challenges included the hijacking of a National Executive Council meeting to air complaints, succession wrangling, and a continuing battle with President Museveni over the provision of vehicles. These troubles translated into refusal by the NRM members of Parliament to acquiesce to the Government's attempt to suspend parliamentary procedure to quickly pass the resolution to approve the Somalia mission.

¶13. (SBU) Opposition parties remain weak and personality-based. The opposition's primary tools are press and protest because they are substantially outnumbered in parliament. The opposition agreed to return to Parliament after walking out over the Executive Branch's continued defiance of a court order to release on bail suspected members of the People's Redemption Army (PRA) arrested with Museveni's principal electoral rival, FDC's Kizza Besigye. Another party grabbed the headlines earlier this year by demanding that the government act on the findings of a Scotland Yard investigation into the death of one of Museveni's former ministers, who had fallen out with the President. Uganda's press traded headlines and boosted sales for weeks over the report - which said Kiyiira was killed by armed robbers or government soldiers. The government called in the reporters and editors responsible for the articles, which, along with other recent actions, has had a chilling effect on the independent media.

¶14. (SBU) The government's human rights record remains poor, particularly with respect to cases of arbitrary arrest and detentions and lengthy pre-trial detention. However, the consensus of a wide range UN agencies, international and local NGOs, and civil society organizations indicates that over the past year, the UPDF has demonstrated marked improvement in respecting the human rights

KAMPALA 00000312 003 OF 004

of the IDPs under their protection in northern Uganda. While abuses were at one time entrenched and do still happen (particularly involving local defense units), they can now be categorized as individual incidents that do not occur as result of orders from senior officials, and are no longer part and parcel of the institution.

¶15. (SBU) The reasons for this improvement are attributable to a number of factors, including lowered tensions due to a reduction in the threat level, reassignment of the most notorious UPDF commanders whose units were associated with human rights abuses, increased international attention, and ongoing training by the USG, ICRC, and other organizations on international standards of human rights and humanitarian law. Organizations continue to monitor abuses and are working through the UN's cluster approach to improve reporting measures. The forcible disarmament program in Karamoja, however, has opened up the UPDF to new allegations of abuse.

- - - - -
ECONOMIC GROWTH
- - - - -

¶16. (SBU) President Museveni is a steadfast supporter of free market principles and remains committed to liberalizing the economy, containing inflation, and encouraging economic growth, and foreign investment. Foreign debt has dropped from over USD 6 billion in

2004 to USD 1.6 billion in 2007 through debt relief programs. Uganda is attempting to diversify its agriculture-based economy, focusing on non-traditional, high-value items such as vanilla, processed fish, and cut flowers. The pace of economic growth has remained consistent over the last twelve with annual GDP growth rates between 5-6 percent. Foreign direct investment is increasing. The fastest growing sectors are construction, transportation and telecommunications. Uganda's tourism industry is earning a significant amount of foreign exchange.

¶17. (SBU) An ongoing energy crisis, corruption and inadequate transport infrastructure have hampered economic development and investor confidence. The energy crisis, which started in late 2005 due to poor energy planning coupled with a significant drop in Lake Victoria water levels, severely decreased electricity generation from hydroelectric power. Recent rains are increasing hydroelectric power output and new leadership in the Ministry of Energy has added 100 megawatts of thermal generator power to help fill the power gap. Uganda was approved for by the Millenium Challenge Corporation for a two-year \$10.4 million Threshold Country Program (TCP) in Uganda to provide technical assistance, training and equipment to Government of Uganda's anti-corruption agencies and civil society organizations.

- - - - -
INVESTING IN PEOPLE
- - - - -

¶18. (SBU) Uganda is a focus country for the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and received \$170 million in PEPFAR funds for the Centers for Disease Control, USAID, Peace Corps, and Defense and State Department programs. The program is one of the largest in Africa, along with South Africa and Kenya. Uganda's HIV/AIDS infection rate peaked at 18 percent in 1992 and has decreased to 6.4 percent in 2006. The decline is largely the result of an aggressive public awareness campaign and significant donor support for programs that provide comprehensive prevention, treatment, care and support services for those infected and living with HIV/AIDS, orphans and vulnerable children, and pregnant mothers. The Defense Department's PEPFAR program (\$1,486,400) supports Walter Reed Army Hospital and the UPDF's efforts to provide comprehensive prevention, care, and treatment services to reduce HIV transmission among UPDF personnel, their families, and surrounding communities.

- - - - -
OUR MESSAGE
- - - - -

¶19. (SBU) U.S. efforts to mitigate the affects of the conflict in the north and bring about a resolution and reconciliation to the conflict in the north dominate our peace and security agenda. More recently, the U.S. assistance for the Ugandan deployment to Somalia has become the focus of our attention. Nonetheless, we continue to advance our interests in encouraging multi-partyism and political competition, economic transparency, and combating HIV/AIDS. Our message to President Museveni includes:

--Recognition of Museveni's efforts to bring about a peaceful resolution to the 21-year old conflict with the LRA. The GOU has demonstrated restraint and patience during the peace talks at Juba. The USG supports the Juba venue and Government of South Sudan's

KAMPALA 00000312 004 OF 004

mediation efforts.

--Reaffirm our commitment to working with the GOU to mitigate regional tensions. We encourage Uganda to continue talking to its neighbors, particularly Congo, to deal with the regional aspects of the LRA problem.

--Appreciation for Uganda's long-standing commitment to deploy to Somalia and the high level of professionalism demonstrated during the deployment preparations.

--Efforts to assist the development of a democratic system, which

includes strong civil society and democratic institutions, respect for human rights and rule of law, and transparency and accountability.

--Partnership with Uganda in the war against terror. We look forward to continuing to work with Uganda on the global war on terror and other programs of bilateral cooperation.

BROWNING